

## United States Senate

HART SENATE OFFICE BUILDING  
SUITE 112  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0505  
(202) 224-3553  
<http://boxer.senate.gov/contact>

February 17, 2006

The Honorable Donald Rumsfeld  
Secretary of Defense  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Secretary Rumsfeld:

I am writing to express my deep concern over reports that the Army is lowering its standards and allowing more recruits with criminal backgrounds and substance and alcohol abuse problems to enter military service.

According to the *Baltimore Sun*, there were 737 waivers issued by the Army last year for alcohol and illegal drugs alone. While I understand that many individuals struggle with and overcome alcohol and substance abuse problems, it is wrong to issue waivers for recruits who test positive for amphetamines, marijuana, and cocaine *during* recruit processing.

There was also a significant increase in the number of recruits with "serious criminal misconduct" last year, including those with a history of such crimes as aggravated assault and robbery. General Barry McCaffrey commented on this disturbing trend, suggesting that: "By and large these are flawed recruits."

While I am extremely aware that we are facing a recruiting and retention crisis in our armed forces, we can not further compound this problem by recruiting individuals who are not qualified for military service. We are currently asking the men and women of our armed forces to complete many difficult and dangerous missions around the globe, particularly in Iraq and Afghanistan, and it is clear that they will need additional manpower to carry out their missions. We should only be sending the very best reinforcements, not those who fail to meet the requirements for military service. It is not only unfair to our active duty service men and women, but a disservice to that potential recruit who may be sent into harm's way.

In light of the *Baltimore Sun* report, I would like to know what systems—if any—are in place to review and restrict the granting of such waivers. I would also like to know if you believe any offenses should be nonwaivable. For example, do you believe it is appropriate to admit individuals to the United States Armed Forces who test positive for drug use during recruit processing?

Thank you for your consideration of this request. I look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Barbara Boxer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name and last name clearly distinguishable.

Barbara Boxer  
United States Senator